

Message Text

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72

ACTION ARA-20

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SUBJECT: VISIT WITH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

1. ACCOMPANIED BY AGRICULTURAL ATTACHES CRAWFORD AND BARNES, I MADE A COURTESY CALL YESTERDAY ON MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FROILAN ALVAREZ YEPEZ, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE BACKGROUND IN HIS NEWLY CHOSEN FIELD. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SPOKE WITH CONSIDERABLE FAMILIARITY OF THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN IN THE SCIENTIFIC USE OF LAND RESOURCES; AND SAID THAT HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH WISCONSIN TO BRING A TEAM TO VENEZUELA TO GIVE EXPERT RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FULFILLMENT OF PRESIDENT PEREZ' FAR-REACHING BUT SOMEWHAT IMPRECISE PROGRAM FOR BETTERING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF THE VENEZUELAN ECONOMY*

2. PREVIOUSLY MESSRS. CRAWFORD, BARNES AND I HAD A LONG TALK WITH THE SPECIAL ADVISOR OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, DR. CASAS BRICENO , WHO SHOWED A SCIENTIFIC AWARENESS OF THE DIFFICULTIES APPLYING ACROSS THE BOARD AGRICULTURAL SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES WHICH MIGHT WORK MARVELOUSLY WELL IN ONE ENVIRONMENT AND TO PRACTICALLY NO EFFECT IN THE

ENVIRONMENT WHICH CONCERNED HIM MOST; NAMELY, VENEZUELA. HE CITED BY
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WAY OF EXAMPLE THAT THE POPULATON OF CENTRAL VENEZUELA SEEMINGLY COULD

NOT EXIST WITHOUT EATING BLACK BEANS, BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RAISE BLACK BEANS IN CENTRAL VENEZUELA. I REMARKED, HOWEVER, THAT THE STATE OF NEW YORK WOULD BE VERY HAPPY TO SUPPLY THIS COMMODITY ONCE THE NEW CROP CAME IN.

3. A MORE SHOCKING STATISTIC INTRODUCED BY CASAS BRICENO WAS THAT IN VENEZUELA, A COUNTRY WHICH PRACTICALLY SHARED THE INVENTION OF CORN WITH MEXICO AND GUATEMALA, THE GOVERNMENT WAS CURRENTLY IMPORTING

250,000 TONS OF CORN A YEAR FROM SOUTH AFRICA. HE AND HIS MINISTER THOUGHT THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR THEIR PROBLEM WAS TO BRING IN TECHNICAL ADVICE ON THE SPOT TO SEE WHAT WOULD GROW HERE WELL AND WHAT WOULD NOT.

AGAIN HE CITED A VARIETY OF WHEAT WHICH FLOURISHES IN COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA, AT AN ALTITUDE OF 6,000 FEET BUT WHICH AT THE SAME ALTITUDE IN VENEZUELA WILL NOT EVEN LIFT A BLADE.

4. I RECALLED TO BOTH THE MINISTER AND HIS ADJUTANT SECRETARY KISSINGERS

REMARKS AT MEXICO CITY ON OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL IN TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY AND OF THE SECRETARY'S OBSERVATION THAT IT WAS PROBABLY MORE EFFECTIVE TO DO THIS VIA THE UNIVERSITY CHANNEL THAN BY RELYING UPON US GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. I, THEREFORE, HOPED THAT AS AN EMBASSY WE COULD BE HELPFUL--IF SO DESIRED--TO FURTHER THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCED ECONOMIC PROGRAM BY PLACING THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT IN CONTACT WITH THOSE US AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS WHICH POSSESS THE PERSONNEL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC SECTORS OF THE VENEZUELAN ECONOMY. I WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT AS A DIPLOMAT THIS SEEMED ALMOST AS MUCH A POLITICAL AS AN ECONOMIC PROBLEM SINCE THE EX-FARMERS NOW COMPRISING 40 PCT OF THE POPULATION OF CARACAS LIVING IN THEIR RANCHITOS ON THE BRIM OF THE VOLCANO PREFER THEIR SOMEWHAT INDIGENT WAY OF LIFE (PLUS TELEVISION) TO THE MORE RIGOROUS EXISTENCE OF THE INTERIOR.

5. MILET'S "MAN WITH THE HOE" HAS NOT YET REPLACED BOLIVAR AS A NATIONAL FIGURE.

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